(a) whether it is a fact that the prices of diesel and petrol have increased twice during the last two months in the country;

(b) if not, the details thereof and the rates of diesel and petrol in the metros, at present;

(c) whether it is also a fact that by selling diesel and petrol on the above rates, Government are realizing nearly 50 percent of the amount as tax from the consumers; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the amount of tax being realized by Government on diesel and petrol?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRIMANI SHANKAR AIYAR),: (a) and (b) In view of the increase in international prices, the selling prices of Petrol and Diesel were increased *w.e.f.* 16.6.2004 and 1.8.2004. With a view to modulating the impact of high international prices on the domestic consumer prices of petrol and diesel, a price band mechanism has been put in operation effective 1.8.2004, as per which oil companies can effect price revisions only within a prescribed price band. At present, the retail selling prices (RSPs) of petrol and diesel in the four metros are as follows:

(in Rs./litre)

Product	Delhi	Kolkata	Mumbai	Chennai
Petrol	36.81	39.82	42.12	40.14
Diesel	24.16	26.51	30.30	26.13

(c) and (d) At present, the excise duty on petrol is @23%+Rs. 7.50/- litre and an education cess @ 2% thereupon. Similarly, the excise duty on diesel is @8% + Rs. 1.50/litre and an education cess @2% thereupon. The proportion of excise duty revenue per litre of the RSPs at Delhi of petrol and diesel is around 32% and 12% respectively. In addition, the proportion of sales tax revenue per litre of the RSPs is 16% for petrol and 11% for diesel.

AI's subsidiary for ground handling operations

† 2205. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(a) whether it is a fact that a Subsidiary Company in the name and style of Air India Transport Services Ltd. (AIATSL) for providing ground handling services has been introduced by Air India;

(b) whether it is a fact that there is no Cabinet approval for the introduction of AIATSL and that no contract has been signed for providing ground handling with either Air India or any other Foreign Airlines; and

(c) if so, the reasons for these employees being paid salaries for several months without working for a single day?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVILAVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The process has already been initiated for obtaining approval of the Cabinet to form a subsidiary company named Air India Air Transport Services Limited (AIATSL) for providing ground handling services. No contract has yet been signed by AIATSL for providing ground handling services either to Air India or to any other Foreign Airlines.

(c) As on 1st July 2004, the company has 34 Customer Agents, 14 Loaders and 6 Cashiers. The Customer Agents have undergone training, which is a pre-requisite for their job functions, at Staff Training College in Mumbai. They are also being trained at Marketing Cells for familiarization with systems and procedures. As far as Loaders and Cashiers are concerned, they have been deployed in Air India's perishable cargo operations in Mumbai and have been carrying out their assigned job functions.

Increase in Tourist Inflow

2206. SHRI RAMAMUNI REDDYSIRIGIREDDY:

SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO:

Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any plan to increase the present tourist inflow of 3 million to 10 million in the next two years;

(b) whether Government have any plan to extend special economy study package tours for students coming from abroad;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether the Ministry of Tourism propose to issue a common visa for SAARC countries which will also help in increasing the tourist flow into the country; and